



# GOOD PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

TERRAPIN (*Trachemys scripta* spp.)



# GOOD PRACTICE MANAGEMENT GUIDE FOR Terrapin (*Trachemys scripta* spp)

There are a number of non-native terrapin species in the UK including:

Red-eared terrapin (Red-eared slider, Red-eared turtle), Yellow-bellied terrapin, Cumberland slider, Common slider

## For ID guides and more information:

<http://www.nonnativespecies.org/index.cfm?sectionid=47>

<http://www.terrappin-info.co.uk/identification.php>



Photo by Luis Garcia CC BY-SA 3.0

Cover photo by Brocken Inaglory CC BY-SA 3.0

Version 1: August 2018

Red-eared Terrapin (*Trachemys scripta elegans*)



# MANAGEMENT SUMMARY



## Ecology and impact of terrapins

Freshwater 'turtles' occur in ponds, lakes, riparian zones, water courses and wetlands. In the UK, especially at urban parks, lakes, canals and rivers where terrapins have been released – these animals can typically be seen basking on emergent logs or rocks. They are capable of dispersal over land for several kilometres, but most released animals remain at release site and so do not spread.

*Trachemys scripta* spp. are currently unable to reproduce in the wild anywhere in the UK under prevailing climatic conditions. Terrapins can live for about 40 years, sometimes longer. Therefore even if reproduction does not occur, they can survive in the wild for many years and have a severe impact on their environment.

Terrapins are opportunistic omnivores subsisting on several species of plants and animals, from insects and other invertebrates to all vertebrates, including amphibians and reptiles, small mammals and birds. The food preferences change with age. Juveniles are highly carnivorous, but as they become older they eat progressively larger quantities of vegetable matter. In the wild adults predominantly often eat various species of aquatic plants. Specific impacts in GB has not been documented but likely to be localised.

## Effective management: summary

Terrapins are very easy to catch when suitable methods are employed. Individual terrapins will invariably be noticed, especially while basking. Direct removal of adults can be achieved by trapping, netting, hand capture, or shooting (often not suitable for urban environments). Presently, in the UK, removal is limited to individual waterbodies where terrapins are considered to be causing problems; carried out by local stakeholders. A wide range of commercial 'turtle traps' are available in the United States and can be ordered online from the UK (or can be self-made).



# MANAGEMENT METHODS

## Manual

### *Basking traps*

Basking traps take advantage of terrapins' behaviour of hauling themselves out of the water onto an emergent substrate to bask. A number of designs of basking trap are available. Traps are floated in the water at sites where terrapins are known, or are likely to, bask. In Spain, modified Aranzadi turtle traps (photo 1) have proved effective. Essentially, this trap is comprised of a floating 'cage' with a slippery inside frame from which turtles cannot climb out.



**Photo 1: Aranzadi Turtle Trap. Left: trap before being placed on the river. Right: a turtle *Trachemys scripta elegans* captured in the trap (Photograph: Aitor Valdeón from Valdeón et al. 2010).**

### *Immersed traps*

Terrapins can be trapped with a variety of nets and funnel-traps: minnow, sein, fyke, Cathedral, and crayfish traps. The latter three devices are all funnel-type traps and as such should be set partially-submerged to avoid the captured animals drowning.

In Australia, Cathedral traps are used in preference to basking traps which are difficult to transport and unsuitable for use in public or high visibility locations. Bait used in funnel traps can be placed either suspended near the funnel entrance or placed in bait containers deeper inside the trap.

## **Constraints**

Trap preference is sometimes determined by the level of visibility to the public in addition to efficacy.

## **Animal welfare**

Terrapins removed from the wild can be disposed of either by humanely euthanising them, or by transfer to a wildlife animal sanctuary/rescue centre, though this is often difficult because of the large numbers already in rescue centres. Euthanasia must be undertaken in an appropriate and humane manner according to the Animal Welfare Act (2006) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/45/contents>

It is advised to consult a veterinarian. [BSAVA Manual of Reptiles, 3rd Edition](#) includes information on euthanasia.

## **Legislation**

Under the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation, as well as under Section 14 (1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Article 15 (1) of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, it is an offence to release or allow this species to escape into the wild. This includes the release of animals taken into captivity for welfare reasons. Under the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation it is also an offence to import into the EU, keep, breed, transport (to, from or within the EU; except to facilitate eradication), place on the market, use or exchange this species - unless there are specific exemptions or permits.

## **Health and Safety**

Useful resources and guidance on health and safety when planning a project working with invasive species is available on the GBNNSS website: <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/index.cfm?pageid=266>



## References

- Bringsøe H. (2006). *Trachemys scripta*. NOBANIS – Invasive Alien Species Fact Sheet. European Network on Invasive Alien Species, 13pp.
- Nall I. & Thomas R. (2009). Does method of bait presentation within funnel traps influence capture rates of semi-aquatic turtles? *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* 42, 161-163.
- O’Keefe S. (2009). The Practicalities of Eradicating Red-eared Slider Turtles (*Trachemys scripta elegans*). *Aliens: The Invasive Species Bulletin. Newsletter of the IUCN/SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group*. 28, 19-24.
- Perry G., Owen J.L., Petrovic C., Lazell J. & Egelhoff J. (2007). The red-eared slider, *Trachemys scripta elegans*, in the British Virgin Islands. *Applied Herpetology*, 4, 88-89
- Scalera R. (2006) Fact sheet on *Trachemys scripta*. Delivering Alien Invasive Species Inventories for Europe (DAISIE). 4pp.
- Valdeón A., Crespo-Diaz A., Egaña-Callejo A. & Gosá A. (2010). Update of the pond slider *Trachemys scripta* (Schoepff, 1792) records in Navarre (Northern Spain), and presentation of the Aranzadi Turtle Trap for its population control. *Aquatic Invasions*, 5, 297-302



## Where To Go For More Information

- ◆ <http://www.europe-aliens.org/>
- ◆ <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/home>
- ◆ <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/rapid>
- ◆ <http://issg.org/database/species/ecology.asp?si=71&fr=1&sts=&%20ang=FR&ver=print&prtflag=false>

## RAPID

RAPID is a three year EU funded LIFE project led by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), with Natural England and Bristol Zoological Society as key partners that piloting innovative approaches to Invasive Alien Species (IAS) management in freshwater aquatic, riparian and coastal environments across England. The project is supported by a number of further Technical Partners.

<http://www.nonnativespecies.org/rapid>